

HISTORY OF
ST. IVES
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



1894-1974

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ILLUSTRATED

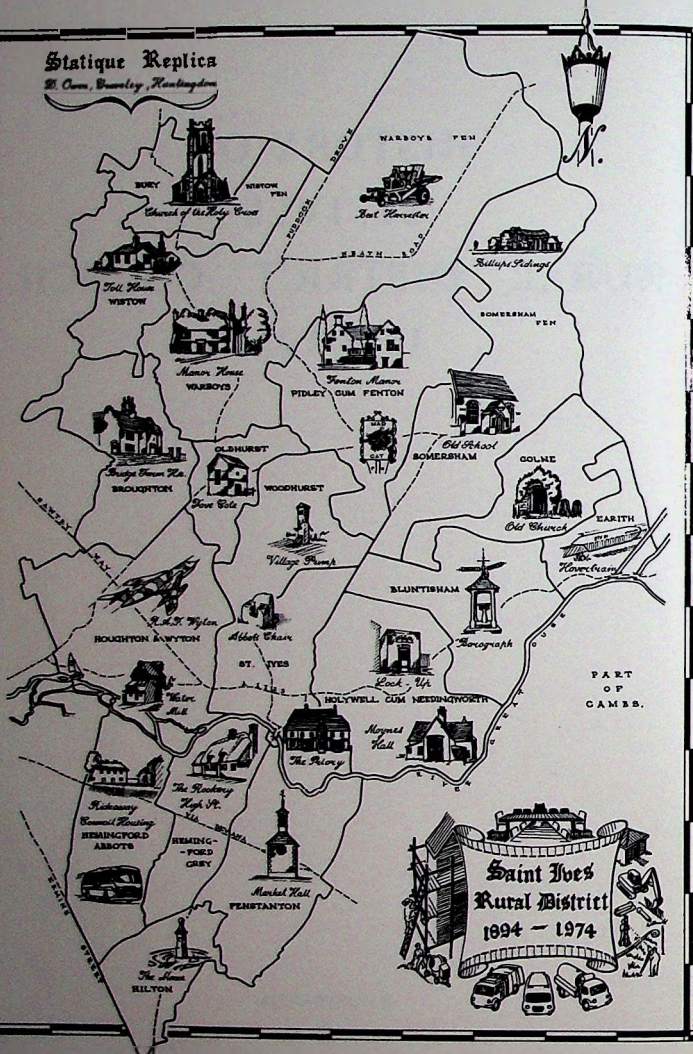


ST. IVES RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

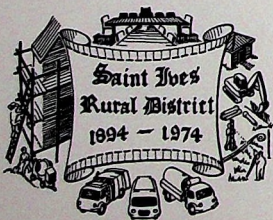
1974

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B. Owen, Bransley, Hantsington



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OF
CAMBS.



FOREWORD

This is a history of the St. Ives Rural District Council, and the Parishes comprising it, from the time it was formed in 1894 until its dissolution in 1974. It has been written with a view to being a readable treatise for those interested in local history, as well as setting down the predominant events for posterity, whilst still fresh in peoples memory.

The Council is indebted to the many who have assisted in this work, in particular to The late P. G. M. Dickinson, F.S.A., F.R.Hist., for the historical research, unfortunately not quite finished at the time of his death. E. A. N. Jones, for the chapter on the Council itself. R. J. Todd, A.R.S.H., A.F.S., A.M.Inst.B.E., District Surveyor and his staff, for material and for the illustrations. Mrs. J. M. Lees, B.A., for editing the work, particularly as it was at very short notice.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
THE WORK OF THE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL	5
THE ORIGINS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT	5
HISTORY OF SAINT IVES RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL	10
SAINT IVES RURAL DISTRICT	16
THE PARISH COUNCILS	23
THE WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCILS AFTER 1894	31
TRANSPORT	38
INDUSTRY	41
APPENDIX	45
Chairmen of the St. Ives Rural District Council, 1895-1974	
Members of the First Council, 1895	
Members of the Last Council, 1974	
Clerks of the Rural District Council, 1895-1974	

ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of the District	2
Justice of the Peace Warrant	8
Hemingford Grey Windmill 1929	18
Pelican Inn, Warboys. Receipt	24
Parish Pumps	26
Letter to Hemingford Grey Churchwardens	30
Warboys Fire Brigade. Scale of Charges	37
Wyton Docks	40
Board of Guardians 1930	46
Council 1974	46
Bluntisham Barograph	48

THE WORK OF THE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Every Rural District, when established, had to appoint a clerk as chief administration officer, a medical officer of health and a sanitary inspector: treasurers and surveyors could be appointed at discretion. St. Ives Rural District is managed by all these chief officers, who are, in fact, technical advisers to the Council and committees. The members of the Council are elected by vote, each parish council being obliged to elect a representative and the Council elects a chairman who remains in office for a year or longer, as decided by the councillors. In the early days of the Rural District the chairman often held office for long periods: James How, the first chairman, held the seat from 1895 until 1908, and his successor, J. G. Green held it for ten years, but L. R. Edwards holds the record of 21 years, from 1928 to 1949. The practice since then has been that the chairman is elected for three years only. Standing committees for certain purposes such as finance, housing, public health and establishment have been formed, all of which report monthly to the general council meeting.

It would be impossible to list all the functions of the Rural District Council, but the following list may give some idea of the matters which have been considered: housing, sewerage and sewage disposal, refuse collection and disposal, acquisition of land for various purposes, burial of the dead, public clocks, historic and ancient buildings, bathing facilities, public footpaths, naming of streets and numbering of houses, hospital services and facilities, public transport, postal and telephonic services, highway improvements, planning and development, road safety, gas, electricity and water services, residential development by private undertakers and sports facilities. In the main the Council has enjoyed good relations with the County Council and neighbouring local authorities, even if there have been disagreements in some matters.

Members of the Council have always, as far as it is known, acted independently, irrespective of any political party, in the interests of the district and their respective parishes. They have represented a wide cross-section of the community, and since 1948 there have always been some women members. In fact, at the end of the Second World War two ladies were co-opted on to a committee to get the female point of view on certain matters.

THE ORIGINS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By the time the Romans arrived in Britain, the country was divided into tribal areas, often vaguely defined, with centres from which authority was exercised. The invasions of the Anglo-Saxons, and later the Northmen, eventually abolished the tribal system. England became divided into kingdoms, probably having originated from the area subjugated by an invading army, and frequently at war with one another. When more peaceful times came, the germ of local government began to grow, with

the land divided into numerous areas of government, which were now all counties, but by late Saxon times, all united under one crown.

These counties had evolved from the former independent kingdoms, and some have remained almost unaltered to the present day, such as Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Norfolk and Suffolk. Other kingdoms were too large for easy administration, so they were divided in to smaller units, also known as counties, but usually having the suffix "shire" added to their name from the Anglo-Saxon "scir", meaning "a cutting off" indicating that they have been cut off from a larger area : Huntingdonshire is an example of this. Even then some counties were too large and had to be sub-divided, hence the "ridings" of Yorkshire and the three divisions of Lincolnshire. Each county was under the control of an earl, later a sheriff, appointed by the crown, with exceptional authority, and to whom royal mandates were directed.

The counties were then divided into a number of smaller administrative units known as "Hundreds", which survived in a somewhat emaciated condition until about 40 years ago. Some counties contained many hundreds, like Cambridgeshire, which comprised $26\frac{1}{2}$, while Huntingdonshire could only aggregate four. Within the hundred there might be one or more "boroughs", towns exercising some self-government independent of the county, and manors, formed in Norman times, but probably having earlier origins, which were subject to their owners' control.

Each county was also divided into parishes. Originally, these parishes were for ecclesiastical purposes but during the last 200 years or so, they also assumed their present civil administration functions. The parish could be, and often was, coterminous with the manor, within which it was situated, although it might contain several manors or form only part of a larger one. Similarly, a borough might consist of one parish or many, like Huntingdon, which had sixteen in the Middle Ages. The parish became the smallest unit of local government after the demise of the manor.

Our present system of local government, which grew out of this multiplicity of different authorities, was regulated by several Acts of Parliament, which were passed during the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was one of reform both nationally and locally, no doubt due to the effect of the French Revolution and its aftermath. There was a widespread feeling of uncertainty and change had become urgent. England was moving into a new era and many acts of Parliament strove to remodel and modernise our mode of government and living.

One of the first great enactments, the Reform Act of 1832, overhauled our parliamentary system. This was quickly followed by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 which undertook the reformation of the boroughs, many of which had become non-representative oligarchies. The numerous antiquated privileges which most had enjoyed were swept away, many "rotten" boroughs being disfranchised in the process. A uniform constitution was given to those allowed to remain and a large number of towns, previously without representation, were given charters of incorporation. Parliament and the boroughs having been re-

formed. It was now the turn of local government, and there chaos reigned. There was no co-ordinated system but a variety of petty authorities often in conflict with each other. Gradually, these were taken in hand and further acts of Parliament followed laying the basis of modern local government as we know it. County Councils covering the whole of England were established in 1882, and twelve years later, in 1894, came the formation of Urban Districts, Rural Districts and Parish Councils within the County Councils who had certain powers over them. At last, Local Authorities, with definite work to do and defined areas within which to operate, were established. Many will, alas, come to an end on 31st March, 1974 when new Local Authorities come into being, but their memory will be enshrined in the magnificent work they performed during their existence.

It is now time to consider some of the various authorities who were responsible for local government before 1882. First, and undoubtedly the most important, were the JUSTICES OF THE PEACE, unpaid magistrates selected mostly from the upper classes. The Office dates from the time of King Edward III and, until 1919, was the prerogative of men but after that date women were eligible. Their prime duty was the keeping of the peace and they were endowed with extensive powers. They attended to a wide range of activities, both judicial and civil. Much of their civil work disappeared after the reforms of 1882 and 1894 as gradually the new local authorities took over more and more of local administration. Their judicial powers, however, have continued without much alteration to the present day.

The PARISH CONSTABLE, from whom our Police Force has evolved, is possibly the oldest Office in local government and goes back at least to the twelfth century. At first the constable was appointed at the Manorial Court but in 1842 the power was transferred to the Vestry. This was not a very satisfactory arrangement by any means and led to the passing of several Acts of Parliament during the last century. Under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, previously mentioned, Watch Committees were established and in 1839 an Act was passed enabling Justices of the Peace in Quarter Sessions to raise and equip a police force for their county. This worked reasonably well for many years but there were too many authorities and this did not make for concerted action. The solution was the establishment of the present system whereby England is divided into a few large areas, each under the control of a Chief Constable.

Except for the transference of land, MANORIAL COURTS had largely sunk into insignificance. They had once played a very important part in local administration, but their authority was limited to the individual manor. The courts, which were of two kinds, came into being after the Norman Conquest, the lord of the manor having jurisdiction, usually in minor matters, over his tenants and land. As the centuries passed, this jurisdiction declined and, in many cases, was taken over by



Huntingdonshire, } To the Constable of *Wiston*
in the said County.

WHEREAS *Ann Wright* of *Wiston* of

in the said County Singlewoman, hath by her Examination taken in Writing on Oath, before *us*

of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the said County, declared herself to be with child of a child likely to be born a Bastard Child, and that the said Bastard Child is likely to become chargeable to the said Parish of *Wiston* and hath charged *Robert*

of *Wiston* in the said County, with having gotten her with Child of the said Bastard Child; And whereas *William Mitchell* one of the Overseers of the

Poor of the Parish of *Wiston* aforesaid, in order to indemnify the said Parish in the Premises, hath applied to *us* to issue out a Warrant for the apprehending of the said *Robert*

Robert do therefore hereby command you immediately to apprehend the said *Robert*

and to bring him before *us*, or some other of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County, to find Security to indemnify the said Parish of *Wiston*

or else to find sufficient Surety for his Appearance at the next General Quarter Sessions of the Peace to be holden for the said County, and to abide and perform such Order or Orders as shall be made, in Pursuance of an Act passed in the Forty-ninth year of the Reign of his late Majesty King GEORGE the Third, and also of an Act passed in the Eighteenth Year of the Reign of her late Majesty Queen ELIZABETH, concerning Bastards begotten and born out of lawful Matrimony.

GIVEN under the Hand and Seals, the *26th*
Day of *November* in the year of Our Lord 18*25*.

Law Reynolds

John Arnold

the Vestry in the nineteenth century. The Law of Property Act of 1925 finally ended the manorial administration.

The CHURCHWARDENS can trace their history from the early years of Christianity and their function was the care of the church fabric and ornaments. After the Norman Conquest their duties became standardised, but gradually civil duties were added to their ecclesiastical functions, and by the nineteenth century they had become all-powerful in many parishes. Like other early local authorities, their civil powers were slowly whittled away and today they have reverted to their original business of looking after the church.

Amongst the most important of the lesser authorities functioning in the parish were the OVERSEERS OF THE POOR. They operated the Poor Law, dealing with those who could not, or who were unable to look after themselves: the aged, the infirm and the unemployed. The Dissolution of the monasteries between 1535 and 1539 was disastrous for the poor whose wants had been relieved at the gates of the many religious houses, albeit in a rather haphazard way. A great increase in the number of poor towards the end of the sixteenth century caused so much trouble to the authorities that in 1601 the office of Overseers of the Poor was instituted, the unpaid members of which were appointed from a list of suitable householders resident in each parish. Their duties chiefly concerned the indigent poor and included the levying of poor rates, providing accommodation when necessary and, later on, the preparation of voters' and jury lists and valuations. The National Assistance Act of 1948 finally ended the Poor Law.

SANITARY AUTHORITIES were first set up in the nineteenth century to enforce the various Public Health Acts. England was divided into sanitary districts and by-laws were made laying down rules and regulations. Sanitation, which included drainage and sewage disposal, was little understood or considered before the sanitary authorities were established and the industrialisation of many towns and districts had led to outbreaks of diseases which had become endemic. As the population grew, so matters got worse until the deteriorating position forced the government to take action. Most of the work of the Sanitary Authorities was taken over by the new authorities after 1882.

Maintenance of roads and bridges was on a parochial basis, and the state of the roads was so deplorable that they were often impassable in winter. During the reign of George III, TURNPIKE TRUSTS were set up by Acts of Parliament, with the duty of remodelling and maintaining important roads, the cost being met by tolls. A great era of roadmaking commenced which laid the foundation of our present road system. There was, however, little co-operation between the Trusts and efforts were subsequently made to bring order out of the confusion. In 1909 the Road Board, a Government department, was established to construct new roads and improve existing ones, the responsibility for minor roads having been assumed by the new authorities created at the end of the previous century.

HISTORY OF SAINT IVES RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

When the Local Government Act setting up Urban and Rural Districts and Parish Councils came into operation on 1st January, 1895 replacing the Rural Highway and Sanitary Authorities, a new era in local government commenced and Saint Ives Rural District Council thus came in existence as the local government unit for the parishes surrounding the Borough of Saint Ives. It comprised an area which has remained substantially unaltered, with the exceptions of two parishes, Houghton and Wyton, being combined in 1934, and the parish of Bluntisham-cum-Earith being divided into two separate parishes in 1948. Minor adjustments have been made by transferring nearly all the Fenton area of Pidley-cum-Fenton to Warboys, and transferring a small area of Somersham to Chatteris (and the County of Cambridgeshire) giving a more sensible boundary of an existing road instead of an indefinite line across fields.

The Council held its inaugural meeting at the Union Workhouse, in London Road, Saint Ives, now known as Limes Estate, on Wednesday, 2nd January, 1895, when the seventeen elected members, each representing a parish of the District, assembled and signed the acceptance of office. Mr. James How, who represented Broughton, was unanimously elected chairman for the ensuing year, and Mr. P. Barlow, the representative for Somersham, became vice-chairman. The Council had no offices nor meeting place of its own, but held its monthly meetings at the Workhouse on the same day as the Overseers of the Poor held theirs, but after their business had been completed. The bulk of the work was undertaken by a part-time Clerk, who used his own offices and staff. The original Clerk was Mr. G. D. Day, principal of the Saint Ives firm of solicitors, Day and Son. Members of the same family held this position until 1939, when the first full-time Clerk was appointed. The Clerk's salary was the princely sum of £15 per annum, plus £2 for postages. Other appointments, required by law, were Dr. Barrett Anningson as Medical Officer of Health, whose salary was fixed at £46 a year, and Mr. John Archer who was appointed "Inspector of Nuisances" for which he was paid, and also "Inspector of dairies, cowsheds and milkshops" plus "inspector of canal boats" for which he received no extra salary. He had previously been employed in a similar capacity by the defunct Sanitary Authority, the "district" of which had included the town of St. Ives, the area covered by the new R.D.C. and part of Swavesey. He continued to serve this same area for a number of years after 1895, his gross salary of £95 per annum being shared by the three local authorities concerned in proportion to their rateable values, the contribution of the St. Ives R.D.C. being £72.

One of the first questions discussed by the Council was that of an official seal. After much cogitation, one was ordered from an un-named firm at the cost of 35/-, with the proviso that it was to be "similar in design to that used by Featherstone", a newly-constituted Urban District in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There is no record in the Minutes of

why this choice was made, but it was probably selected from an illustrated catalogue since it is unlikely any of the Councillors had ever heard of Featherstone or knew where it was.

Various problems had to be dealt with during the next year or so which did not occur again. Mr. J. How had been elected councillor for both Broughton and Oldhurst parishes but this was declared illegal, so he plumped for Broughton and Oldhurst had to have a fresh election. Then, in March 1896, the clerk reported that Mr. W. A. Saunders had been nominated as a District councillor without his knowledge or consent, and had refused to sign the legal acceptance. Another seat was declared vacant, the correct procedure then adopted and another new councillor took office.

For many years the business of the Rural District Council was mainly confined to sanitary matters: water supply, drainage and sewerage, the state of brooks and ponds, housing and infectious diseases. Action taken on these was duly recorded in the Minutes Books, but finance proved a limiting factor. The annual financial reports show that the affairs of the R.D.C. were run on a shoe-string. Much of the income was derived from rates levied in two half-yearly instalments on the seventeen parishes, the Overseers of each parish being responsible for their collection and payment to the R.D.C. Expenditure was for such mundane things as salaries, postages and, occasionally, travelling. The total income came to £70-2s.-0d. in the first year and, twenty years later, had not risen to as much as £200.

Dr. Anningson, the Medical Officer of Health, also presented a yearly report, and they make very interesting reading. He gives detailed accounts of the health of the District, and these reports usually take up several pages in the minute book. The reports are in printed form from 1904 to the year of his death in 1916, and copies were stuck in the minute book for future reference. The reports of the Sanitary Inspector were much shorter and given in a statistical form. Brief particulars are given of all complaints received, the number of houses inspected and disinfected, drains repaired, privies attended to, "offensive" ditches neutralised, polluted water supplies purified, parish pumps repaired and ponds cleaned out. Altogether he must have been a busy man, and certainly earned his salary.

The Minute Books show that infectious diseases were much on the councillors' minds. Consideration was early given to the provision of some sort of infectious diseases hospital for the District and several possible houses, none very isolated, were mentioned which could be purchased for the purpose. However, as soon as the vendors learned to what use the Council proposed to put the property, they usually refused to sell. With its limited means, building a permanent hospital was quite out of the question. One councillor proposed that a moveable "tortoise" tent, fitted with a cooker, to accommodate twenty patients at a time, might solve the problem. Another councillor made a more practical suggestion. Huntingdon already had an isolation hospital, and perhaps the Rural District could share this accommodation. It was eventually agreed that if an annual sum of fifty pounds were paid towards expenses,

then the Isolation Hospital would take up to eight Rural District patients at a time. This Isolation Hospital was situated near Wyton Cross Roads, and was demolished when the R.A.F. Station was developed.

In 1906 a case of diphtheria was reported from Warboys. This did not cause much concern since the disease had been on the wane, but by 1907 twenty-three cases had been diagnosed and this rose to seventy during the next twelve months, including four fatal cases. Huntingdon Isolation Hospital rapidly became full up and a tent to accommodate further patients had to be erected in Warboys. Ordinary people did not understand the danger of contagion, and an apology is recorded from one man who took his son, who was suffering from the disease, for a walk along the public road. The Medical Officer and the Sanitary Inspector did what they could ; sewers were dug up and examined, brooks tested, privies and their accompanying ash-pits were scrutinised and it was finally discovered that all the wells supplying drinking water in the village were contaminated. Efforts to combat the epidemic were redoubled and, by the end of 1908 the danger was over. Regulations were tightened up and people made more aware of the dangers of infection.

The report of the Medical Officer for 1900 included a classified list of infectious diseases which had occurred in the District between 1890 and 1899.

	Small-pox	Scarlet fever	Diphtheria	Croup	Continued fever
1890	—	—	5	—	—
1891	—	67	2	—	—
1892	—	145	1	2	—
1893	7	62	1	—	—
1894	—	26	5	1	—
1895	6	24	5	2	1
1896	—	5	7	—	6
1897	—	5	4	—	—
1898	—	21	1	—	4
1899	—	20	11	—	4

It will be noticed that Scarlet fever was the most prevalent but erratic in appearance, and then followed Diphtheria, a few cases of which were reported each year. Small-pox had been almost eliminated, and Croup and "Continued" fever are almost unheard of today. After 1900 the presentation was altered, being given under three main headings : Diarrhoea, Phtisis and Cancer. For sanitary purposes the District was divided into three sub-districts : Warboys, Somersham and St. Ives, the population being 10,018.

Pollution of water supplies, by individuals or even local authorities, was a serious problem and in 1901 the Twenty Foot river at Somersham became polluted. People living on the river banks used to draw their drinking water from it, and some of them were taken ill. An investigation showed that the trouble was caused by Chatteris diverting untreated

sewage into the river and when, as occasionally happened, the river "backed-up" gross contamination for most of its length resulted.

From 1905 until 1915 Dr. Anningson included a record of births and deaths in his annual reports. The figures show that the births were nearly always about double the deaths each year. No figures were quoted for 1914 and births fell to their lowest level in 1915 when many men were away at war.

Year	Deaths	Rate per 1,000	Births	Rate per 1,000
1905	121	14.7	218	23.2
1906	129	15.5	211	22.5
1907	117	13.5	227	22.3
1908	93	11.9	214	22.7
1909	89	12.0	217	22.0
1910	137	16.1	231	24.5
1911	104	13.0	215	21.8
1912	116	13.1	206	24.4
1913	121	13.1	213	21.9
1914	Not reported			
1915	132	13.9	179	18.3

Consumption or "Phtisis" as it used to be called, and now known as Tuberculosis, became of national concern at the beginning of this century and sanatoria were built by those authorities who could afford it. St. Ives R.D.C. did what it could to combat the disease and, in 1912, a shelter for consumptives was bought for £5-4-6d. and set up in Pidley where there was a resident nurse. However, only one patient could be taken at a time and, since there were several who qualified, selection had to take place. In 1914 the nurse left the parish and the shelter was removed.

1914 commenced in an inauspicious manner with a special note that the Council had decided not to adopt the Public Health Amendment Act of 1907 for the second time, thinking it unnecessary. A large house in Somersham, known as "Manor Hall" was converted into two cottages and the Co-Partnership Society in that village stated it had sold all the houses it had built. Council house building was discussed and loans made available for the purpose, but then came the outbreak of war. One of the undertakings of the Council which was shelved "until the hostilities cease" was the Warboys Housing Scheme. Certain councillors had been appointed to select a site and negotiate its purchase in 1914. In effect, this became the first Housing Committee, and finally accomplished its task by purchasing seven-and-a-half acres of land in Warboys, costing £60 per acre.

Local elections were postponed during the war, but the work of the Council continued. In 1915 the provision of Health visitors was proposed, but nothing done, and a dispute arose with Ramsey U.D.C. over sharing the cost of cleaning out part of Bury Brook. A year later the war was in full blast, and Parliament had passed the Military Service Act and tribunals were set up in the District to carry it out. A list of

doctors of military age was drawn up, and the War Agricultural Executive Committee was established to improve the many backward farms of the county so that more food per acre could be grown.

Sadly, Dr. Anningson, the Medical Officer of Health died in 1916, and Dr. W. R. Grove of St. Ives was appointed to the post. The annual reports became much shorter from then. Outbreaks of Small-pox were feared because of war-time conditions and Swavesey R.D.C. and St. Ives Borough Council jointly obtained a railway carriage which they fitted up as a hospital, and offered to lend it to the R.D.C. if an application were made.

The Defence of the Realm Act began functioning in the District in 1917, and a local Food Committee was formed. Waste paper collections were organised and maximum coal prices which could be charged within the District were published, with penalties for infringements. Household coal economy was enforced in 1918 and the balance in hand on the Highway Authority's account was transferred to the Sanitary Authority.

As time went by, the work of the Rural District Council grew, and as early as 1904 the clerk had asked that his salary be revised, and an increased salary of £25 per annum had been agreed. In 1939 a full-time Clerk was appointed, and in 1948 the post of Medical Officer of Health also became full-time. About 1930 the Council appointed a part-time Surveyor, in conjunction with the Borough, working from the latter's premises. He also acted as Sanitary Inspector, but within a few years it became necessary to appoint a further Officer for these functions, housed in rented accommodation. With a growing staff, the Council needed larger premises and "Mannamead" on The Quay was rented. The present offices at the Priory were purchased in 1946 for £6,000, considered by many at the time to be a very extravagant venture. A few years later the nearby Priory Rooms were acquired, and for the past 26 years the Council has had its own accommodation for staff, meetings, depot and workshops.

As already mentioned, one of the concerns of the R.D.C. was the water supply and to ensure this, the Council joined with other authorities to supply certain parishes: with Chesterton Rural District Council and St. Ives Borough Council in forming the Chesterton and St. Ives Joint Water Board; with Ramsey Urban District Council in forming the Ramsey and Saint Ives Joint Water Board, and with Huntingdon Rural District Council. These schemes continued for many years until the Government's proposals for regrouping water supplies were adopted, the District being supplied by the Cambridge Water Company, with the exception of the parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey, and Houghton and Wyton, which became part of the newly created Nene and Ouse Water Board.

Flooding was one of the main problems which faced the Council for many years. The naturally flat land alongside the river, much of which was known and used as wash land, was often in flood, not only in winter, but also after periods of heavy rain. Under the Parish Awards made by the Inclosure Acts of the 1700's, the Council had inherited certain duties of maintenance of ditches and watercourses in various

parishes, and it became the practice for local representatives to arrange for cleaning, the Council paying the cost. This arrangement continued until 1947, when it was reviewed, and work was then authorised direct by the Council. Many state-aided land drainage schemes were undertaken, the County Council acting as agents, and in this way a considerable amount of beneficial work was carried out. A query from the District Auditor caused the Council to call a halt to this work, and as a result, a farmer at Holywell-cum-Needingworth sued the Council, claiming damages caused by flooding. The Council lost the action and the case established the Council's liability for land drainage. Negotiations with the Great Ouse River Authority resulted in many lengths of awarded watercourses being taken from the Council, on payment of agreed commutation sums, an arrangement which worked very well for all concerned.

Immediately after the Second World War, the Council considered the question of main drainage, and in January, 1949 it accepted a report and proposals for the drainage of the District from its Consulting Engineers. The estimated cost was £490,000, considered by some to be extremely high. In fact, two members of the Council used this as an objection to the proposals at a Local Inquiry in 1951. Although the scheme received the approval of the appropriate Ministry, it was some time before the work began, due to Treasury restrictions, difficulties in agreeing site values and other matters. The Somersham scheme commenced in 1954, followed by others, and as a result, the major part of the District has main drainage. Unfortunately, Government restrictions have meant that not all the proposals will be completed before the demise of the Council.

Housing has always been one of the Council's main concerns. Since the Warboys scheme, mentioned previously, its activities in this sphere have included the erection of houses, flats, bungalows and garages, maintenance of houses and estates, the improvement of existing houses, grants for improving privately owned homes, loans for house purchase, and participation in a Housing Association with a local firm. In 1960, the 1,000th Council House was opened by the then Minister of Housing and Local Government, Mr. Henry Brooke, (now Lord Brooke). Four years later the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord de Ramsey, opened the Windsor Court flatlets at Somersham, the first scheme of its kind in the County.

When selecting names for roads on housing developments, the Council has endeavoured to maintain links with the past. For example, Vermuyden at Earith, and Gunnings Way, Dendys and Sadlers Way at Hemingford Grey refer to people who had associations with those parishes and Tithe Piece Hilton, Furlongs at Needingworth, Headlands and Simmer Piece at Fenstanton, were names associated with land in those villages.

Reorganisation of local government areas was considered on a number of occasions, and in 1948-9 negotiations took place with St. Ives Borough Council and Ramsey Urban District, when they tried to preserve some system of local administration and prevent some government-

sponsored scheme being forced upon them. They agreed to form one district, but the legislation permitting them to do this was repealed before action could be taken. Legislation also prevented the combination of the Rural District and St. Ives Borough in the late 1950s.

In 1969 work was begun on a sports complex on the site of St. Ivo School, St. Ives, the Rural District Council working in conjunction with St. Ives Borough Council and the County Education Authority. The first part of the complex, the swimming pool, was opened in September 1970 by Aldon Griffith, Minister for Sport. The whole project, which will include facilities for most sports, will cost approximately in excess of three-quarters million pounds.

From humble beginnings in 1895, the Rural District Council had progressed to become the authority of an area with modern services, many of which have come into being in the last 25 years. The credit for this must be given to those who have given their services as councillors and to the officials who have carried out decisions of the Council. To this must be associated the Consultant Architects and Engineers without whose services many of the projects could not have been carried out.

SAINT IVES RURAL DISTRICT

GEOLOGY AND SCENERY

The scenery of the Rural District is a comparatively recent phenomenon, for the fields, most of the roads, and hedges where they still remain, all date from the "Enclosures" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before about 1750 the land was cultivated under the "open-field" system which entailed three or four large fields in each parish, divided into strips of a half to an acre in area. This ancient agricultural economy brought into existence the "ridge and furrow" which can still be seen in some of the latter, smaller fields. One effect of the Enclosures was to give us a fine system of comparatively straight roads, bounded by grass verges and fields surrounded by straight hedges and more or less rectangular in shape. Generally, each parish was enclosed separately, either by a special Act of Parliament, or by adopting the later general Act.

Except in the river valley, the scenery is uniformly flat, monotonous and rather uninteresting, with few woods. This is due to the geology of the district which is comparatively simple. Oxford clay, or Corallian, in some places up to 400 feet deep, covers most of the surface except for a small region of fen in the east. In the Ouse valley there is rich alluvium, beneath which there are extensive beds of excellent gravel, forming a valuable "hidden" asset. Extending eastwards across the county from Old Weston (WOLD Weston) on the west, through Oldhurst (WOLD-hurst) and Woodhurst to Warboys and Pidley is a low, generally level, plateau known as the Huntingdonshire Wolds, an area of small agricultural villages surrounded by heavy clay. This elevated district ends in the east by gradually sloping down to the fen and the river valley, as

witness the descent from Houghton Hill to St. Ives, Warboys to the Chatteris road and Pidley down to Somersham.

Other than the Ouse, there are no rivers, but the Bury Brook, running down from Ramsey, has carved a picturesque valley for itself in which Broughton and Wistow cosily hide themselves. Riverside scenery along the Ouse varies considerably. At Earith, and as far as St. Ives it is quiet but plain. Beyond this are the twin old-world Hemingfords on the south bank and the equally pretty and more village-like Houghton and Wyton on the north bank. Here the Ouse is at its best and is the venue of countless motor-cruiser owners, their wants, including mooring, being catered for by several marinas, the largest being Hartford Marina in Wyton parish, near the Hartford boundary.

The small area of fenland bordering the east of the District from Bury in the north to Earith in the south, is as flat as the proverbial pancake; an area of huge fields of black peat earth, interspersed by long, straight droves and drains. Being highly productive, the area is of chief interest to farmers, but naturalists find much to intrigue them, and botanists and ornithologists spend much time studying its unique features. Fenland has a charm all of its own which none but the understanding beholder can wholly appreciate.

Most of the classified footpaths are indicated but the County Council keeps maps which can always be inspected to check where they are. The Thicket Walk from Houghton to St. Ives runs along the foot of Houghton Hill, near the river bank, and the land, which falls steeply here, has contributed to make this the prettiest walk in the District, if not the County.

Here and there are deposits of brick clay and, in the past, many of the villages houses were built from bricks made locally, for nearly every locality possessed its own brickyard, but all have long since been closed. At Warboys, however, an outcrop of excellent clay and here the London Brick Company has one of the most modern and up-to-date brickworks in the country.

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

There are seventeen villages in the Rural District, some large, others merely hamlets, but no two are alike, each having its own particular characteristics. The focal point of the village is usually the parish church, and is generally the only medieval building to have survived. Built of stone, rubble and flint, the church spire often makes a local feature, surmounting the tower and visible over long distances. Splendid examples can be seen at Bluntisham, Warboys, Broughton, Fenstanton, Houghton and Hemingford Abbots.

Domestic buildings tend to be plain but good and, since the stone regions are a fair distance away, timber is the material usually used. Nearly every village can show examples of thatched and plastered, timber-framed farm houses, most of which have large brick central chimneys, and sometimes having clustered flue shafts. Brick came into fashion during the eighteenth century, and here and there fine houses of this material grace village streets. A cheap yellowish brick was produced



Hemingford Grey Windmill in 1929

in the local brickyards and was used chiefly by ordinary folk. It is rarely beautiful and usually gives a drab and monotonous appearance to the streets where it has been used, which the patina of old age refuses to modify.

A short account of each village now follows in which its most interesting features and historical facts are described :

BLUNTISHAM

Bluntisham is a large village of unusually disjointed formation, the main part being to the west, on the north side of the St. Ives to Haddenham road. Here, the principal houses are grouped round a small green, in the centre of which is a barograph. The fine church, distinguished by its unique three-sided apse, tall spire and large north porch, stands almost isolated at the other end of the village, on the south side of the road, with the War Memorial. The eighteenth century Rectory is almost surrounded by trees and the Baptist Chapel, which has a long history, was established in 1787 and rebuilt in 1874. Within recent years a large number of new houses have greatly added to the population of the village.

BROUGHTON

Broughton, as its name implies, is by a brook and in the past the main street of the village has been flooded due to this brook overflowing. Despite its small size, it retains some outstanding houses and cottages, some of brick and some of wood. The thirteenth century church has a Norman font and traces of a "Doom" over the chancel arch. Nearby is the diminutive brick lock-up on the green, and a short distance along the former road to Wistow, now a cul-de-sac, are the banks and moats marking the place where the Abbot of Ramsey had his head manor house, from which all his temporal estates were managed.

BURY

Bury was once the mother-parish of Ramsey, and the village consists of two separate parts, divided by the Bury Brook, with the church and manor house occupying an elevated site on the east side and Owl End on the west side retains one or two old houses. The church has a remarkable tower, and attached to the west wall are the scant ruins of a large chapel of two storeys reminiscent of the "Slipper" chapel at Walsingham. Inside is a fourteenth century wooden lectern, something of a rarity. Much new house building has taken place here, too.

COLNE

Colne has some banks and ditches, the remains of an Iron Age settlement, situated near the Chatteris road. The Anglo-Saxon village was to the west of the present settlement, and is marked by the ruins of the church in an overgrown churchyard, on either side of which was a moated manor house, only one of which remains. Possibly in the seventeenth century, the village moved half a mile eastwards, where the modern church faces the green. Nearby are one or two seventeenth century yeoman-farmers' houses. Much of the parish is now taken up with fruit farming.

EARITH

Earith was a hamlet within the parish of Bluntisham until 1948, when it became a civil parish with its own parish council. For ecclesiastical purposes, though, it remains a chapelry of Bluntisham church. It stands where the Ouse enters the fenland on its way to the Wash, and here locks controlling the waters are situated. In the seventeenth century the Old Bedford River and the New Bedford River were formed to short-circuit the route and the drains run in a straight line, side by side, for twenty miles to Denver sluice. Between them, and close to the modern main road, are extensive earthworks of a Cromwellian fortress known as "The Bulwark" which appears to have no important history. The village contains few houses of note, but where the High Street widens out, was once a market.

FENSTANTON

Fenstanton is one of the larger villages in the Rural District, and has been greatly expanded in the last ten years. The original settlement was around Honey Hill but when a market and fair were granted, it moved along Chequer Street. Later still, in the seventeenth century, it moved again, this time to the Huntingdon-Cambridge road where a Market Hall was built in the centre of a small green and this is still standing. The church has the most magnificent chancel in the Rural District, and contains the monument to "Capability" Brown, his wife and eldest son. The manor of Fenstanton-cum-Hilton was given to Brown by the Earl of Northampton in 1786 in settlement for work done to Castle Ashby. There are a number of interesting houses, notably the old manor house on Hall Green, the home of "Capability", and in Chequer Street, where his son lived. The former green was one of the largest in the county, but was divided up at the enclosure.

HEMINGFORD ABBOTS

Hemingford Abbots is the older of the two Hemingfords, both of which were given to Ramsey Abbey in 974, shortly after its foundation. Formerly, they were separated by the ford from which they get their name, but this has long since fallen into disuse. The village contains a good number of picturesque thatched cottages, some modern council houses in Rideaway also being thatched. Along Common Lane there is a variety of houses, some old, some quite new, and the village school, which also has a thatched roof. Hemingford Park, built by Decimus Burton in 1843, stands aloof from the built-up area and is the home of Commander Alington, the last chairman of the Rural District. The church, approached from a picturesque close, has a very elegant spire and a tuneful peal of bells. In the north aisle is a massive Roman coffin and lid dug up many years ago.

HEMINGFORD GREY

Hemingford Grey is but a short distance from its partner. The old part by the river has some interesting houses, chief of which is the Norman manor house and moat. It retains an original first-floor entrance,

now a window, some Norman windows and a fireplace. The northern front is eighteenth century brick, part of a larger house to which it became a wing, but burnt down at a later date. Here lived the "Beautiful Miss Gunnings", one of whom married an earl and the other a duke. The church stands right on the river bank and its most notable feature is the truncated spire on the tower, ornamented with eight stone balls at the corners, which was blown down in the great tempest of 1741. New housing developments have greatly enlarged the village, particularly along St. Ives Road, Marsh Lane and the Thorpe.

HILTON

Hilton, for centuries part of the manor of Fenstanton-cum-Hilton, is now a civil parish on its own. The beautiful tree-lined green, the finest in the county, is believed to have been "beautified" by Capability Brown and around its perimeter are congregated some excellent houses of diverse dates and character. On the green is the earth-cut maze, maintained by local people. At its centre stands a tall carved pillar surmounted by a unique stone ball-sundial. An inscription records the reforming of the paths by a certain William Sparrow in 1660. The church, a chapel of ease to Fenstanton, stands at the west end of the green. Hilton House, built about 1760, the austere-looking seventeenth century Hall with its large dovehouse, and St. John's College farm of the fifteenth century pre-fireplace type, are the most notable houses.

HOLYWELL-CUM-NEEDINGWORTH

Holywell, named from its holy well adjoining the churchyard is one of the most picturesque of Huntingdonshire villages. Along the "Front", a former bank of the Ouse, the river having deserted it for a more southerly course, are a varied collection of interesting old houses, all neatly restored. At the western end is the church, particularly interesting for its seventeenth century tower which is made up of bits and pieces taken from the ruins of Ramsey Abbey. Two riverside inns of character, the Ferryboat, (alas, no ferry runs to the Cambridgeshire bank now-days), and the Pike and Eel, cater for a widespread clientele. Needingworth, on the main Ely road, a mile away, has always been a hamlet of Holywell, but is much larger than its parent. Unfortunately it was largely destroyed by fire on 16th September, 1847 and so shows few signs of antiquity. Nevertheless, it has its own interest: a lock-up by the War Memorial dating from 1836, and a pair of firehooks, over 30 feet long, preserved on a wall nearby.

HOUGHTON AND WYTON

The civil parish, formed in 1934, took in the two closely adjoining villages and a part of Hartford. Ramsey Abbey was given the two manors on its foundation in 969 and, strictly speaking, neither village has ever had a resident lord of the manor, so there are no manor houses, two manor farms acting as substitutes. Both villages have an exceptional number of fine sixteenth and seventeenth century timber-framed, yeoman-farmers' houses, and in Wyton they flank the main street.

Houghton is centred round a green, its surface now macadamised over, with a picturesque shelter, an iron "Gothic" pump, and a pre-fireplace house, as well as a large bust of Potto Brown, the local philanthropist of the last century. The ancient water mill is now a Youth Hostel, though owned by the National Trust. Houghton also boasts two research institutions: the Poultry Research Station at Houghton Grange and Poultry Biologicals Ltd., occupying "The Elms" a large house built in 1868. Houghton Hill House, erected in 1841 and now the home of Lord and Lady Catto, has recently been renovated. Each village has its medieval church, that of Houghton having an unusual tower and spire while Wyton church has some fine thirteenth century carved capitals and ironwork.

OLDHURST

Oldhurst, the smallest parish, contains a hamlet-village, the interesting thirteenth century chapel-of-ease having a fine south doorway, and a font of the same period.

PIDLEY-CUM-FENTON

Neither Pidley, the main village, nor Fenton, its hamlet on the road to Warboys, is of any size. Pidley is named after someone called "Pidda" who made a clearing there, and has a few pleasant thatched cottages, a large eighteenth century red brick house and an inn with the intriguing name of "Mad Cat". The church was completely rebuilt in the nineteenth century. Fenton, the "farm in the fens", is snugly hidden in a small valley, the brick built, eighteenth century manor house being the only building of note, having some remains of an earlier house and a large rectangular fishpond at its rear.

SOMERSHAM

Somersham, after Warboys, is the largest village in the Rural District and owes its importance to the former Palace of the bishops of Ely, founded in the thirteenth century, of which only the encircling moat, a partly ruined bridge and some earthen mounds and fishponds still remain. The church is a very fine thirteenth century building and nearby is the former Thomas Hammond's school, founded in 1747 but not built until 1782. At the junction with the High Street there was once a market and the manor house has been considerably altered. A track across the fens to Ely was converted into a metalled road in the last century. Its many twists and turns show how the old track followed dryer ground where possible and sometimes ran along the raised beds of former rivers, known as roddons. Somersham was formerly on the old coaching route from Ely to St. Ives and Huntingdon, but this was replaced by a straight road from White Post, an obelisk set up when the road was completed in 1771, and now scheduled as an "Ancient Monument".

WARBOYS

Warboys, a strange-sounding name, has been changed from the original spelling. In Domesday Book it is spelt "WARDEBUSCH" meaning "Look-out wood". The Saxon "busch" was later translated into its

French equivalent "bois" and this was corrupted into "boys". Despite being the largest village in the District, it has few buildings of any antiquity, except for the charming seventeenth century "Dutch-type" manor house, many of the houses being of the dull yellow brick of the last century and there are a number of quite recent houses. The church has one of the earliest and best spires in the county, and inside is a late Norman carved font. Most people have heard of the "Witches of Warboys", a sixteenth century tragedy when three completely innocent people were executed because of the evidence of three children who said that they had been bewitched. Near the site of the former railway station is the Warboys Brickworks, one of the most modern yards belonging to the London Brick Company Ltd. The parish includes a great expanse of reclaimed fen between the village and Chatteris, crossed by a fairly new road.

WISTOW

Wistow lies in the secluded valley of the Bury Brook. Quietly picturesque, it includes some excellent yeoman-farmers' houses: Lime Tree Farm, the reputed manor house, and Porch House date from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The church, although small, has a number of interesting features, the most notable being the screened chapels in the nave aisles and the fine medieval glass in the west window of the south aisle depicting the Annunciation and the Resurrection.

WOODHURST

Woodhurst is probably the best "ring-village" remaining in England. It is totally enclosed within an oblong area, around the perimeter of which runs the encircling road, with an entrance at one end and an exit at the other. The church, like that of Oldhurst, was for many centuries a chapel-of-ease to St. Ives. A pair of fire hooks is preserved on a roadside wall. When founded, the village seems to have consisted of two farms within the oblong and a few farm cottages. Two more lesser farms were later added. The seventeenth century manor house stands aloof from the village and is the only house of interest. It may be interesting to note that the area of Woodhurst is exactly the same as that of Hemingford Grey, 1823 acres.

THE PARISH COUNCILS

In 1894 there were sixteen civil parishes in the Rural District, varying in size, the largest acreage not necessarily indicating the largest population. Changes, related in a previous chapter, have increased the total number to seventeen. On 1st April, 1974, when the reorganisation of local government comes into force, some counties will disappear, including Huntingdon and Peterborough, as will Rural Districts. Boroughs and Urban Districts will cease to be so called, and only the civil parishes will continue more or less as before.

The activities of the parish councils are clearly defined by an Act of 1933, which codified the law relating to the proceedings of local authorities. Every rural parish with a population of 300 or more must hold a parish meeting once a year for all the parochial electors who then elect

JAMES ROGERS,

PELICAN INN,

WARBOYS, HUNTS.

	£	s	d
Beast,			
Sheep,			
Breakfast,			
3 Lunch,	-	7	-
7 Dinner, 36. ..	1	4	6
6 Wine, 5.	1	10	-
Liquor,	-	1	6
Alc,	-	7	6
6 Tea,	-	7	6
Supper,			
Bed, 10.	-	3	6
Servants' Eating, ..			
Tobacco,	-	1	6
Fire,	-	-	2
Hay, 10.	-	6	-
3 Corn, 10.	2	6	-
Washing,			

1830 Mar 24

Allowed Geo Johns

£ 4-2-8

March 24th

Servants

2-6

H Rogers

4-6-0

Pelican Inn, Warboys Receipt

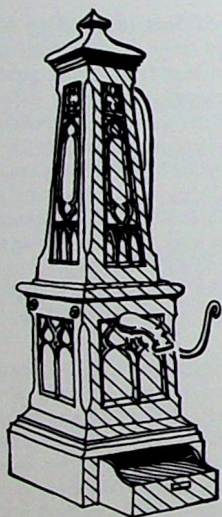
a parish council consisting of from 5 to 15 members, according to its size. The council is elected for three years, and any person who is of age, and fulfills certain qualifications, may be elected. It must meet at least once a year, or more often if deemed necessary. The only officials the parish councils are permitted to appoint are a clerk and a treasurer, who may be paid for their work provided they are not members of the council. The powers of a parish council are restricted to maintenance of footpaths, rights of way and the provision of allotments. They can provide offices and places for meetings, such as parish halls, recreation grounds, burial grounds and libraries, although the latter only rarely. Whatever the type of authority, the amount of finance available is the factor governing what can be done. If a parish has less than 300 population all it is entitled to have is a parish meeting, normally held once a year, and its powers are almost nil.

Little has hitherto been published on specific parochial administration after 1894, but here follows, in alphabetical order, a brief resumé of the activities of the seventeen parishes comprising the Rural District from that date onwards, probably the first time such an exercise has been attempted. When the author was asked to undertake this task he feared it might be a boring one, but to his great surprise and pleasure, it has turned out to be a most interesting expedition into an unexplored realm of our country's smallest local authorities and their administration. From the beginning it was clear that each parish had its own way of managing its affairs, but with the aid of the Rural District Council when needed. All the existing parochial minute books have been read but the series is far from complete and it is astonishing how careless some councils have been, in the past, over the custody of their records, since a number of minute books appear to be lost. Here is a list of missing minute books :

Bluntisham-cum-Earish	1894-1931
Broughton	1914-1933
Bury	1933-1945
Houghton	1894-1910
Houghton and Wyton	1912-1921 ; 1933-1938
Oldhurst	No books of the Parish Meeting
Somersham	1894-1937
Warboys	1894-1914
Wistow	1894-1934
Woodhurst	1894-1956

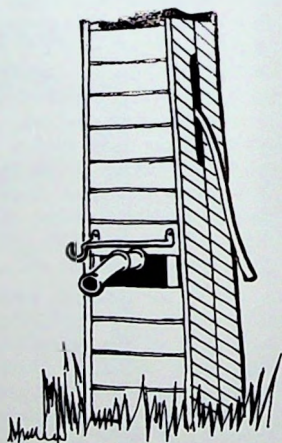
and to this extent the history of the parish councils is incomplete.

It will be noticed, in reading the following Parish Council histories extracted from their minute books, particularly when a series is complete from 1894, that the amount of business transacted in the first twenty years is very restricted. Apart from such routine matters which affect every parish, water supply is a recurring problem : too much in winter when the roads become flooded because brooks are not properly cleaned, and too little in summer when the wells run dry. In some cases water had to be imported during droughts and sold to villagers by the pailful. Village pumps, usually the principal water supply before piped

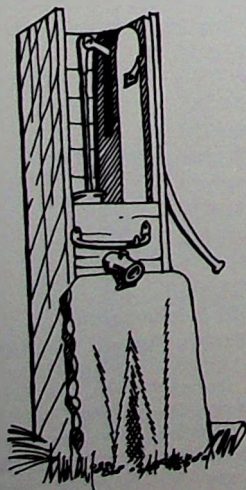


Houghton

Parish

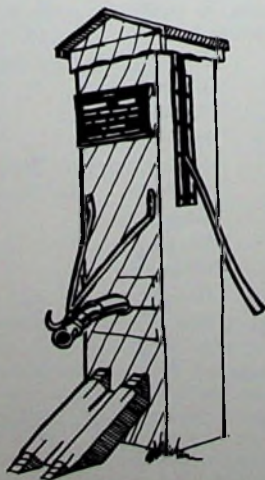


Pidley



Somersham

Pumps



Woodhurst

water came, and often referred to and their maintenance was always important. When they eventually went out of use, some were merely cast aside as useless, others were sold as scrap but a few were preserved, notably that at Houghton, which still presides over what used to be the village green. It is now clad in a protective coat of blue paint, and is standing evidence of an enlightened Parish Council which realised its value as an historical monument. Vandalism first appears in the records in connection with pumps and in one village, children put the newly repaired pump out of commission by stuffing stones down its spout. In another case the council threatened not to undertake any further repairs if they were immediately nullified by wilful misuse.

Strange as it may appear, little is heard about parochial activities during the First World War and it was only after the peace had been declared that things began to look up. The minutes of the period are often short and uninformative. Tersenness appears to be a virtue practiced everywhere but, here and there, light breaks through and some interesting or novel point is raised and a glimpse of a forgotten parish administration is seen.

In the 1930s housing, or the lack of it, loomed large on many agendas, but since this was the province of the R.D.C., all the parish councils could do was to express opinions as to what should or should not be done, which was frequently precious little. Between the two wars street lighting, which had been either non-existent or inadequate, was tackled and gas ousted oil, only to be replaced in its turn by electricity. Roads also came under review, and from the reports one can get a clear picture of their state. Uncut verges, narrowness and potholes caused many complaints, the last-named becoming an increasing danger as traffic multiplied. Dust created by cars is frequently mentioned and appeals made to the Highway authority to tar the road surfaces.

The Second World War brought many new problems, not the least being the war in the air. Some years before hostilities commenced, councillors discussed what should be done in that event. Then, in 1939 and after, A.R.P. instructions followed one another in bewildering numbers. Gas masks were distributed, stirrup pumps bought, although one council could only afford a barrow pump, and fire-watching arranged. Wistow, a quiet, un-pretentious village was very surprised to learn from the powers-that-be that it had been decided such rural communities would not be advised of air raids, nor would they be supplied with sirens. Apparently all that could be done to warn inhabitants of danger was to blow the air-raid wardens' whistles. Luckily, little damage was done by the enemy during the war in the Rural District, despite the number of airfields in the area, though near-by Ramsey suffered extensive damage when an enemy bomber discharged its load over the town late one morning. Somersham also received a "packet" when a bomber crashed on the village, causing several deaths and a fire. A number of bombs fell in open fields, startling the local rabbit population but doing little else.

After World War II the business of the parish councils expanded as witness the greatly enlarged and detailed minutes recorded. In fact, it

would appear that more business has been transacted in the past ten years than in the previous seventy. Much of this increased work was due to Governmental directives and circulars, passed on by the Rural District Council for consideration by the parishes. In the opposite direction, frequent requests for modern amenities were forwarded to the R.D.C. for implementation. Appeals for various charities add to the number. Here is a list, taken from the minute books of one Parish Council of such matters :

- 1936 Unburnable rubbish (what to do with tins, old iron etc.)
- 1939 et seq : A.R.P.
War Weapons Week.
- 1946 Victory celebrations.
Allotments.
- 1948 Numbering of houses and naming of streets.
- 1950 Providing Parish Council notice boards.
Festival of Britain.
Civil Defence.
Parish Surveys of National Parks and access to the countryside.
Lord Mayor's Thanksgiving Fund.
National Playing Fields Association.
- 1951 Royal College of Nursing Education Fund.
- 1955 Custody of parochial documents.
Road Safety Campaign.
- 1956 British Empire Cancer Campaign.
Hungarian Relief Fund.
- 1960 Village road signs.
King George's Jubilee Trust Appeal.
- 1961 Litter baskets.
- 1964 Home Helps.
President Kennedy's Appeal Fund.
- 1965 Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Appeal.
- 1966 Provision of bus shelters.
- 1968 Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill.
Exhibition of St. Ives and District History.
- 1970 Mr. E. A. N. Jones, R.D.C. clerk for many years, retires.
- 1971 Keep Britain Tidy Campaign.
- 1972 Countryside Treasures and Eyesores.
Planning Policy — Rural Villages, (from the County Planning Office).
- 1973 Tree Planting Year.

Royal occasions are considered from time to time and appropriate action taken when national events impinge on the rural community. Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and her death are noted in those minute books which survive from that period. Coronations are always a good excuse for festivities and some parishes excel themselves in the

celebrations organised, others pass on the work to willing helpers and often call on the local Women's Institute.

The "Best-kept village" competition had a mixed reception when it was first introduced and quite a number of villages refused to enter, probably because they did not know exactly what "Best-kept" implied and were, possibly, a little ashamed of their condition. Later, several relented, and one village made determined efforts to win a prize each year, but, though the marks gained rose steadily, the prize remained elusive. In the first few competitions, villages could exercise their discretion as to whether they entered or not but later on the County Council decided that all should compete willy nilly. Again and again untidiness lost marks and one of the chief culprits was the churchyard. However, if the competitions did nothing else, they made the villages more conscious of shortcomings and improvements followed. It is safe to say that nowadays the villages of the Rural District are far better kept than ever they were twenty years ago.

Many odd occurrences are recorded in the minute books and some have been mentioned in this book if for no other reason than that statistics and routine duties need brightening up occasionally. One very curious item deserves special mention: why on earth did Woodhurst Council buy an unwanted telephone post? No reason is given in the minutes. It must have been too big for a flag-pole and chopping it up would seem to be an unnecessary exercise. No doubt there is an answer somewhere, but it has eluded the writer.

Every now and again something irregular is done: an election mismanaged, a meeting irregularly summoned and minutes voided as a result or other more difficult problems arise because the "Law" has not been properly observed. It is then that the clerk of the Rural District comes into action, rights the wrongs, and sets the erring Council on the straight and narrow path of good government. Mr. E. A. N. Jones, who retired in 1970, the R.D.C. clerk for many years, acted as father-confessor on numerous occasions, gave penance, pronounced absolution and all was plain sailing thereafter.

The Parish Clerks must not be omitted from this history for their work has been invaluable. They are a varied and unpredictable group, and some take great pride in their work even if their spelling is, to say the least, "countryfied". Every so often their excellent calligraphy is an example which some of their successors would have done well to emulate. The handwriting is of all kinds, beautiful or otherwise, sometimes scratchy and twiddly, thick or thin, some bolt upright, others sloping so much as to give the impression that it would not take much to make the words fall over and turn upside-down. It is lucky the archivist-author of this work studied palaeography which enabled him to struggle successfully with some of the more abstruse examples which were sometimes more difficult to decipher than the oldest medieval manuscripts. A number of clerks now type the minutes which makes reading them far easier. However, the minutes are usually typed on loose sheets of paper, tuck in to the books, which causes unmannerly bulging. Perhaps some enterprising clerk in the future will find a solution to the problem.

11 Aug^r. 1806 - The Hemmingsford Award of this Court directs that the proprietors of the Great Meadow shall be authorized, & empowered to feed & depasture the Number sort of Cattle afterwards named (i.e.) For every Acre of Land in the said Meadow (one in proportion for any greater or lesser quantity than one Acre) One Cow; or instead of such Cow, two Dudes under two years old; or three weaning Calves, or four Sheep; or one Horse instead of two Cows - And that such feeding & depasturing of the said Meadow shall begin on the thirteenth (day) of August & end on the thirteenth (day) of February in every year - ~~the said~~

The Churchwardens & Overseers of the poor for the time being have the mandate - who are directed to raise yearly from the proprietors any Sum not exceeding one Shilling for each Acre to defray the necessary Exp^s incurred for good & ~~the~~ management of the Meadow

Gentlemen - above I send you an extract from the Hemmingsford Award; that if you are determined to carry into execution, of impounding my Sheep, which I intend to turn on to Morrow, it may be with your Eye open to the expensive consequence - If I had keep, or ed elsewhere get keep, conveniently for my Cows, I wd. not oppose the measure agreed upon (as you say) in testimony; because I shd. like to go on hand in hand with my Neighbours, without adding to the better of the law; but I cannot this year give up my Right to feed the Meadow till the 13th Feb^y - & I understand there are many other Commoners as usual disposed for feed as myself - I therefore give you Notice that to Morrow Morning I shall turn on the Meadow 4 Sheep for every Acre in the Meadow in my own occupation - and I am occupy 25 1/2 A. - I am Gent^l.

Yours de^r

To the Churchwardens & Overseers
of Hemmingsford Grey

J. Hargrett

Wth 26th July 1807

Letter to Hemmingsford Grey Churchwardens

THE WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCILS AFTER 1894

BLUNTISHAM-CUM-EARITH

Despite the fact that there are no minute books before 1910, some idea of the work of the Council can be gained from the Annual Parish Meeting books and these show that much of it concerned the ten village charities. The Parish Council's minute books after 1910 are very informative but the two villages in the parish soon began to act independently of one another. Earith councillors early formed their own committee to deal with sanitation, and later to manage the recreation field.

Complaints were received about the inadequate lighting on the suspension bridge and about excessive tolls charged on the Willingham and Sutton roads. In 1920 objections were raised to the building of ten "Municipal" houses on grounds of poor water supply, and in 1946 the parish finally got electric street lighting. In 1948 the two villages became separate parishes.

BLUNTISHAM

Road and traffic problems arise frequently, and include pot-holes in the roads, dangerous corners and narrow roads, parking, speeding and even complaints about a gang of motor cyclists who chased each other around the village. Some improvements have been made by the provision of "danger" signs and road widening. Other matters considered by the Council were the bus services, stops, shelters and timetables, obstructed footpaths, the playing fields and the rectory chickens. In 1970, the Council was annoyed to learn of the sale of the old Station Yard when it was too late to register an objection. The last matter considered by the Council was purchase of a piece of land for a green or open space, but costs proved prohibitive, and half the area was eventually built on.

BROUGHTON

Safety of the parish documents was one of the first concerns of the Council. The old chest in the church was used, but in 1906 an iron safe was bought. In 1896 it was decided to enlarge the overcrowded burial ground, and the subject is frequently mentioned during the next 70 years. A grave digger was appointed with an annual salary of £2, and a fee for each grave dug. Flooding caused many problems, including the rescue of Mr. Winter, who got stuck in a flood in his car. Eventually, the County Council was persuaded to do something about it, and in 1950 the roads were raised above flood level. The problem had not been helped, when, in 1908, a Mr. Clarke had pulled down a dam which had helped control the waters. After a court case, he had to make restitution. Shortage of water in summer was a perennial problem, the wells often running dry. During shortages, water was imported and sold at a half-penny a pail. This problem was finally solved in 1939 when the village

got piped water. People living along the brook repeatedly neglected to do their duty and clean it out so the parish was forced to take action. Other entries in the minute books relate to the provision of public telephones and street lighting. Blackout and incendiary bombs were discussed in 1941 when the R.D.C. sent a supply of sand bags, but no sand.

BURY

Much of the Council's time, like that of other parish councils, has been taken up with pumps, lighting the streets and housing especially in more recent times. The burial ground, too, has caused a lot of discussion and in 1956 it was enlarged. In 1937 it was decided that the old recreation ground was useless, and was let. The decrepit Church Hall was a problem, particularly as no-one seemed to own it. Relations with the County Council were strained when the unsightly depot belonging to it contributed to the poor results achieved by Bury in the "Best-kept village" competition, and also when the County carried out some work on the village Pond without consulting anyone.

COLNE

For Colne, a frequent item on the agenda was the village pond, which needed cleaning often, causing endless complaints because the mud was not carted away. It also had to consider the mundane problems of roads, watercourses, droves and lighting. Gipsies and caravan-dwellers were unwelcome visitors and it proved difficult to move them on. In 1920, the Council had a shock when it was informed that there was a bill for three pounds, but only three pence in the bank, and in 1950 the clerk had to postpone receipt of his salary for the same reason. House numbering was instituted in 1948 and in 1956 the pump was scrapped. Playing fields were discussed in 1951 and every year thereafter until a field was eventually purchased in 1959. When the Annual General Meeting of 1961 was declared null and void by the County Clerk, Mr. E. A. N. Jones, Clerk of the R.D.C. had to come over and sort out the trouble, and ensure it did not happen again.

EARITH

When Bluntisham and Earith became separate parishes, it was agreed that Earith should keep the documents of the defunct Bluntisham-cum-Earith Council, both the new Councils having keys to the safe. In 1949 the Council decided to ask Bluntisham to hand over their keys, and this has been a matter for dispute between the two Councils ever since. The provision of street lighting and vandalism by boys with catapults were early topics dealt with by the Council, and in 1949 the village hall was handed over to the Council. This caused endless trouble with bills for initial repair, fire precautions, extensions and damage. Since there was little demand for allotments it was decided to turn them into playing fields in 1966. The village pump was removed in 1949, but the pond was declared an "asset" in 1972, and a hundred pounds set aside for its rehabilitation. What to call the local telephone exchange, which was often confused with Erith in Kent, was finally solved when the Council decided that "Huntingdon" should be added after "Earith" in

the telephone directory, a suggestion that it should be called "Blun-tisham" having been decisively rejected. Other matters considered by the Council were disputed rights of way, the proposed by-pass, the Hover Train project, and the ownership of the New Lode and the "Island".

FENSTANTON

Being on the edge of a large tract of fenland, drains, ditches, brooks and bridges were of prime concern to the Council. Footpaths, stiles and road verges also took up much time. A fire engine committee was set up in 1895 but since a fire engine was beyond the financial means of the Council, it had little to do. A letter was written to the County Council in 1903 asking that a speed limit of ten miles an hour be imposed along the High Street because of dust caused by motor cars. Pumps, ponds, sewers, footpaths, unburnable rubbish and parking all occur regularly in the minutes and after the Second World War propositions regarding housing and the by-pass to solve congestion in the High Street feature prominently. 1950 saw the provision of a Recreation Ground and the following year a sewage scheme was agreed, the first of its kind in the county.

HEMINGFORD ABBOTS

Until 1934 the minutes are extremely brief, but as business grew, so did the minutes. Black Bridge, over the backwater, leading to the foot-path across the meadows to Houghton Mill, is often referred to, and was finally replaced by a bailey bridge in 1947. Proposals for village lighting were repeatedly turned down until 1964 and an installation was officially switched on in 1967. Cattle grazing on grass verges, and the flooding of Hemingford Meadow are both mentioned and housing takes an increasingly important place in the minutes as the village expands. Twelve villages constables were nominated each year by all parishes, and although their names were usually recorded, their occupations are rarely stated. This entry in the 1926 minutes is therefore of more than ordinary interest :—

J. E. Pratt, chauffeur
Wm. Locke, chauffeur
T. R. Watson, gardener
G. Perkins, blacksmith
H. Lavender, gardener
J. Haynes, gardener
G. Ransom, platelayer
J. Richardson, labourer
G. Murphy, roadman
J. Papworth, labourer
G. E. Ransom, labourer
F. Wallis, groom

Other items which occur are damage to the river banks caused by the wash of passing speed boats, the provision of a public telephone and

rights of way. Hemingford Abbots won the "Best-kept village" competition three times, in 1960, 1965 and 1969, something of a record. In 1964 the "Village Plan for the Hemingfords" is first mentioned and in 1967 a village policeman was appointed for the two villages. The proposed "millenium" of the village, to be celebrated in 1974, is reported in 1972, when the Council was informed that Mr. P. G. M. Dickinson was writing a book on both Hemingfords for the Peace Memorial Trustees as part of the festivities.

HEMINGFORD GREY

The business-like Council had a list of rules and regulations printed on the fly-leaf of the minute book, and lost no time in getting down to work and considering some drainage problems. The provision of a new burial ground was then undertaken, and when the new cemetery was laid out and divided into two parts, one for members of the Church of England and one for Nonconformists, the Bishop of Ely was asked to consecrate the "church" portion. He refused on the grounds that he, "declined to consecrate any portion of a cemetery formed by a Burial Board".

Each year Meadow Reeves are appointed by the Council to stock the meadow, which is "stinted" annually from 13th August to 13th February. A dispute arose with the vicar of the parish when he refused to hand over the part of the Enclosure award applying to the parish on the grounds that it belonged to the Vicar and Churchwardens, the matter finally being settled by having a certified copy made. The ancient ford, the churchyard wall and refusal to allow a military tournament to take place on the Meadow all feature in the early minutes and in 1919 the fire-hooks were sold for scrap. Street lighting was discussed many times, but it was not until 1962 that the village finally agreed that it was needed. Recent problems for the Council have included car parking and nuisances caused by broiler houses. In 1962 the Houghton, Wyton and Hemingfords Sewage Scheme began, and in the last few years several public meetings have been held to explain the Village Plan and the road improvement proposals.

HILTON

Hilton was reluctant to form a Council at first, claiming it did not have a large enough population in 1894, but this plea was ignored and a Council was formed. One of the Chairmen, who occupied the chair from 1926 to 1946, Dr. S. J. Peters, was Member of Parliament for the county. For many years the business of the Council was the usual routine stuff : tree-logging, water courses, footpaths, fords, stray dogs, the five village ponds and the three pumps. The latter were sold to a scrap merchant in 1957. The Maze took up a lot of the Council's time and energies, too. The Second World War brought a fresh crop of problems for the Council as well as 54 evacuees to the parish. More recently, ownership of the Green has been disputed and finally settled by buying the freehold from the lord of the manor for five pounds in 1971. Other subjects discussed were housing, street lighting, seats on the green, parking by lorries, a bus shelter and sign posting bridleways.

HOLYWELL-CUM-NEEDINGWORTH

Until 1947 the bulk of the business of the Council concerned the administration of local charities, footpaths, the Annual Feast and speeding motorists. Annual reports were also received from the "Banks and Doves" caretakers. A curious prosecution took place in 1922 when the caretakers sued the rector for five shillings rent for Holywell Pond, which the rector claimed as part of his glebe. Recently the lock-up and the fire-hooks have been repaired and preserved and a playing field provided after much discussion. Street lighting was introduced in 1949 and in 1959 a bus shelter was built, after years of debate since finding a suitable site proved difficult. Main drainage was undertaken in 1951, and in 1954 a proposal to extract gravel in Overcote Road was rejected. Encroachments by the Ferryboat inn were settled in 1968 when the proprietors bought the encroached land for one hundred pounds.

HOUGHTON

Houghton was a separate parish until 1933, and much of the business of the Council was restricted to the annual feast, street lighting, the pump on the Green, drains and ditches and the custody of the Parish Award. Other problems for the Council to solve were how to stop people driving carts at night without lights and the removal of a disused sawpit and a pile of rotting timber which had been obstructing the chapel entrance. A new cemetery was made in 1900 and a copy of "The Law of Burials" was purchased to assist the Council in its management. In 1914 the shelter, erected in 1902, required re-thatching.

WYTON

The Council was concerned about not having a constable of its own, the nearest policemen being in the Hemingfords, but, despite several requests one was not appointed. It was more successful in its request for a pillar-box, which was eventually provided in 1927, albeit in the wrong place. In 1917 a reward of a halfpenny was offered for each queen wasp killed, and sixpence for each wasps' nest dug up.

HOUGHTON AND WYTON

The two parishes were united in 1933 despite strong objections from Wyton, but no records can be found for the first twelve years of its existence. However, after that, matters which constantly recur were the river and its banks, floods, footpaths, the village clock, street lighting, the closed churchyards and the cemetery, the parish pump and the boundary ditch. In 1946 the Council took over the parish hall and renamed it the "Memorial Hall". The provision of a playing field was often discussed and in 1960-61 the present field was purchased. In 1953 a lorry damaged the Green Shelter and the clock, and in 1970 the village pump was finally retired. Disapproval was expressed at the design of the new houses in Victoria Crescent and the new by-pass was discussed.

OLDHURST

Oldhurst did not become a civil parish until 1951, and since then most of the business has been of a rather hum-drum nature : the bus services, drainage, footpaths, postal services, street lighting, a bus shelter and Wellington Close Housing Estate. The ponds came under review several times, and in 1954 the vice-chairman lost his seat due to non-attendance. In 1957 a scheme was drawn up for a village hall. A pile of bricks left lying around for a long time caused complaint, but a suggestion in a press report in 1966 that the village was dying resulted in a letter of protest to the paper concerned. The new primary school and increasing traffic on the A141 were also discussed in recent years.

PIDLEY-CUM-FENTON

Much of the Council's work was at first taken up solely with routine matters : fen roads and ditches, "Brows" and stiles, drains and dykes, particularly Drag Lane ditch. The village pump was often mentioned in the minutes, either because it needed repairing or painting or because of vandalism, and on one occasion when the straight spout was replaced by a curved one. A Sparrow Club was formed in 1917 to do battle with the sparrows and rooks were also a nuisance. The Council prepared for war by buying three stirrup pumps and four helmets. After the war the Council turned its attention to street lighting, street names and a new bus shelter. In 1966 the Council purchased the old school for a village hall, and also "20 cats-eyes, recently laid in Oldhurst Road" were reported missing, but later found to have been buried under road repairs.

SOMERSHAM

Despite the fact that the minute books covering the years 1894-1937 were deposited with the County Record Office, no trace of them could be found. The Parish Council was informed, however, that the Record Office has "three volumes of the Survey of the Manor of Somersham, published in 1788-89". Early entries in the existing minute books mention long delays at the railway crossing, bill-posting, the possibility of bringing electricity to the village and the preservation of the fire-hooks, subjects which frequently recur. In 1940 the band was broken up, the Council taking charge of the uniforms and instruments, and in 1941 an A.R.P. sub-committee was formed. An ambulance was bought in 1943, and the White Post obelisk disappeared to prevent giving useful information to the enemy. After the War, the Cranbrook Drain frequently gave trouble, and school meals and street lighting were often discussed. The Annual Fair was first held in 1848 at the Cross, and the playing field frequently appears in the minutes. Complaints were received about a strongly smelling rubbish dump, motor-cycles and transistor radios, while the Old People's Homes, an Over-Sixties Club, Industrial development and the closure of the railway were all debated. 1952 saw the return of the old Town Crier's bell and a silver bowl was won in 1968 in the "Best-kept Village" competition. The minutes of the annual Parish Meetings were kept separately and contain reports of the various parish charities.

WARBOYS

Warboys is the largest parish and the remaining minute books are detailed, and hence of great interest. The fire brigade forms an important part of the village administration and after a fire in 1924 got out of hand and destroyed three houses, some farm buildings and a shop, it was decided to replace the old hand fire engine by a horse-drawn "steamer". Eventually, the brigade was disbanded in 1935 and the engines sold. The village feast gets an annual mention in the minutes and the Jubilee Clock and its tower caused much discussion, especially in 1918 when the clock-winder was threatened with dismissal if he used bad language to the clerk who had been authorised to ask him to keep the clock properly timed. Ten ferrets and a rat-catcher to deal with the rodent problem appear in 1919 and the village was presented with a captured German gun as a war trophy, which was sold for scrap in 1940. World War II brought the usual problems of black-out, air-raid shelters, A.R.P., fire-watching and fighting and evacuees. Street lighting, public conveniences and playing fields were frequently discussed, as was the Weir, a large pond which proved very expensive to maintain and was the subject of a house-to-house enquiry about its fate. Relations with Ramsey were not always cordial, particularly after the Ramsey Chamber of Trade

SCALE OF CHARGES.

IN THE VILLAGE.

	First 2 hrs.	afterwards.
Captain ...	5/- per hour.	2/6 per hour
Lieutenant ...	4/- ..	2/- ..
Engineer ...	5/- ..	2/6 ..
Ast. Engineers each	4/- ..	2/- ..
Firemen ...	3/- ..	1/6 ..

OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE.

First Officer in Command	21/-	For Turning Out.
Second	21/-	
Engineer	21/-	
Ast. Engineers, each	15/-	
Firemen	5/-	

Hire of Horse and Driver or Lorry extra.

R 60x

Warboys Fire Brigade Scale of Charges

WARBOYS FIRE BRIGADE

Established June, 1898.

Captain : W. TAYLOR, Mill Green.

Lieutenant : A. MOORE, Station Road.

Engineer : E. BROWN, High Street.

Asst. Engineers :

W. SETCHELL, High Street.

C. BATEMAN, Mill Green.

Firemen :

A. E. HARVEY...	...	Post Office.
J. E. MUNNS ...	...	High Street.
S. COX	...	High Street.
A. HUGGINS ...	...	High Street.
H. H. HUTCHCRAFT	...	High Street.
H. RIGNALL ...	...	Mill Green.
ED. BATEMAN ...	...	Mill Green.
G. SETCHELL ...	...	Ramsey Road.

FIRE STATION—HIGH STREET.

Palmer & Son, Printers, Ramsey.

complained about the neglected roadside verges in Warboys, and in 1963 the Council learnt from the press that Ramsey R.D.C. proposed to re-organise its boundaries, taking over part of Warboys without consulting the Council. Finally, vandalism had become a problem, the shelter by the Clock Tower being a victim on several occasions.

WISTOW

Records begin in 1934 when doubts about the water supply were expressed, and in 1935 a notice was put up saying, "Water is strictly reserved for Wistow parishioners only", but this had little effect on the celebrations for the King's Jubilee when 33 lbs. of beef and 32 lbs. of pork were bought for a feast. It was reported in 1940 that "20,000 rat-tails had been collected in the area" but no mention was made as to their disposal. Flooding, bad roads and provision of a village hall were frequently discussed, the latter finally being realised in 1965, twenty years after it was first mentioned. Allotments were often mentioned, too, as was street lighting and a bus shelter, erected in 1968, but badly damaged by vandals. The Council took over the churchyard which had been closed since 1885, and also agreed to the extension of the cemetery. Poor attendance at both the Annual Parish Meetings and the Parish Council meetings caused concern, but fortunately attendances have improved in recent years. Finally, the Wistow Sewage Scheme was explained in 1973, and will eventually replace the rather primitive system now in use.

WOODHURST

Dangerous corners were a frequent problem, and Swan Weir pond needed much attention, it having once been the village water supply. The pump, too, was a recurring item in the minutes, and the administration of the Claypits Charity takes up much of the Council's time, this being the village's only charity, for the relief of old folk. In 1971 the Council was informed that there was no plan for large scale developments in the village, and one of the most recent problems tackled by the Council was that of aircraft turning over the village, but a letter to R.A.F. Wyton produced no satisfactory results.

TRANSPORT

FOOTPATHS, BRIDLEWAYS, AND TOWING PATHS

Throughout the seventeen parishes of the Rural District, many of the old routes of communication are still to be found, and are mostly well-preserved. The Definitive Statement of Public Rights of Way notes all the public footpaths, bridleways and roads used as public paths in existence on 9th September, 1953, and a copy of this document, together with maps, can be found in the offices of the local authority.

CARTERS

The Carter was very necessary to the villages, and nearly every village in the District had its Carter or "Carrier". At first, pack-horses were used, but as loads grew heavier carts or waggon took their place. As production of goods became more sophisticated, it was found to be more

practical to take people to one place of work, rather than having a series of small workshops, hence the growth of local bus services. With the buildings of factories, too, greater quantities of raw materials were needed, so barges, and later, railways, brought them to quays and sidings, where they were collected by Carters. The improvement of roads meant that the distance goods were carried on them could be increased, and with the arrival of the petrol and diesel engines, Carters have become our modern road hauliers and bus companies.

RIVER TRANSPORT

When the barge was the most popular method of transporting goods and materials, 74 miles of the River Ouse were navigable, from the Wash Docks upstream to Bedford, but the last load of timber was discharged at The Waits, St. Ives in 1938-9. Since then the river has been developed as a leisure amenity, with Marinas at Wyton, Fenstanton and Earith, and moorings at Houghton, the Hemingfords, Holywell and Needingworth.

RAILWAYS

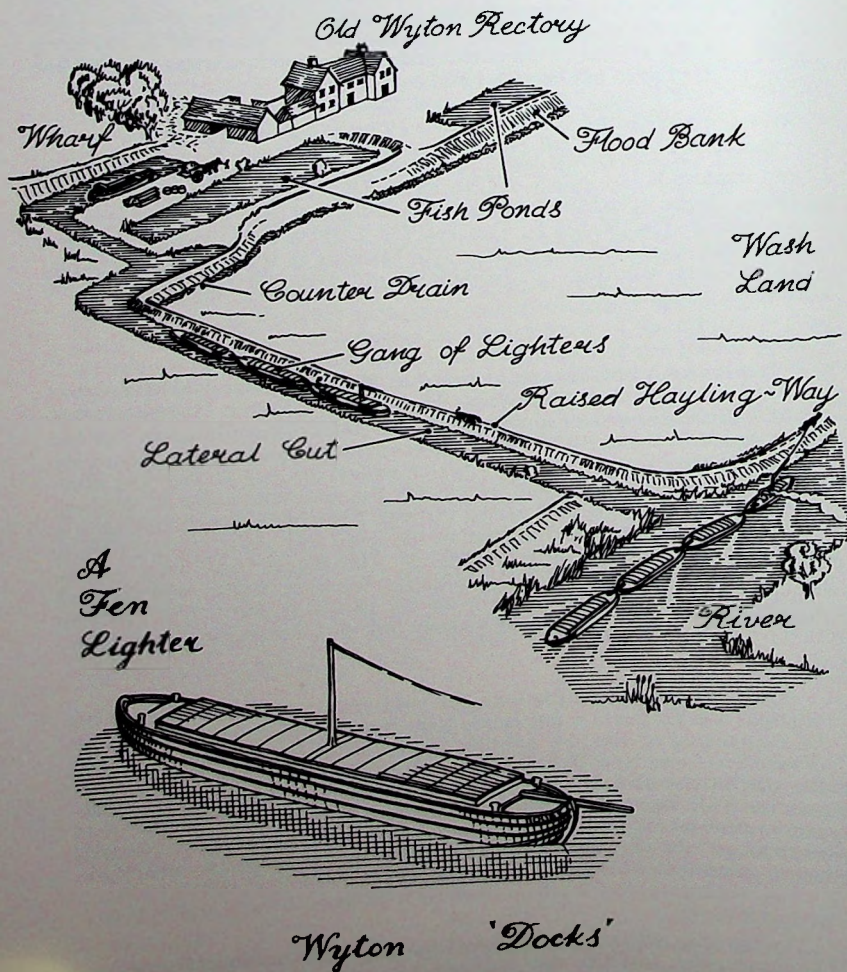
The station at St. Ives was opened in 1848, and rebuilt in 1887. It was served by single line track from Huntingdon East via Godmanchester, which crossed the river no less than four times in that distance. The line was closed in the early 1960s and later removed. Another line serving the area was the Cambridge to Ely, which passed through St. Ives and Bluntisham, with its branch line, which left the main line north of Needingworth Road Crossing and passed through Bluntisham Heath cutting to a branch east of Somersham Station, the main line going on to Chatteris and the marshalling yards at March. The branch line, after leaving Somersham, went on to Pidley Sidings, Warboys Station and Ramsey East Station which was actually in the parish of Bury. This line was closed in 1967, and in 1970 the railway link with Cambridge was severed.

ROADS

Apart from minor alterations, the road system of the District has not changed a great deal. A few bends have been straightened and new roads have appeared on the new housing and industrial estates. The A.141 was diverted to form New Road, Warboys as a wartime measure, to increase the size of the airfield. The A.604 has been realigned to by-pass Fenstanton. This was a Roman road, known as "Via Devana", and the A.14 just south-west of Hilton, follows the route of Ermine Street. The only road to go out of use was that from St. Ives to Oldhurst, which was closed when the airfield at Wyton was extended.

BUS SERVICES

The first bus service was operated by Mr. Ambrose Bone Course and his family who, in 1920, saw the need for a bus service in the area and bought a bus. He later increased this service to a fleet of seven buses and eventually sold out to a big company. All the villages in the Rural Dis-



trict are now served by Eastern Counties Omnibus Company, United Counties Omnibus Company and Whippet Coaches, who, in addition to operating local services, operate services to Cambridge, Ely, Chatteris, Huntingdon, Bedford, Aylesbury and London.

THE FUTURE

In 1967 the Company known as Tracked Hovercraft Limited was founded to develop a range of new technologies for use in guided public transport systems. Their new centre was at Earith, and a track was built on which the experimental Hovertrain, the RTV31, reached the speed of 150 mph in trials. However, due to lack of Government support, these experiments had to be suspended in 1972, but they must have an influence on high speed transportation in the future.

Roads are obviously of great importance in a modern society and there are several proposals to improve the road network in the District. These include the improvement of the A.604 Cambridge to Godmanchester road, a gyratory road at Bury, a by-pass for Needingworth and a relief road to the east of St. Ives, part of which will run through the Rural District.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES

When the Rural District was established in 1894, there were no industries except brick-making at Warboys and timber yards at Earith, within its boundaries, and this remained the case until after the Second World War. It was essentially an agricultural area, farms varying in size and stock rearing was equally important as arable farming, though many farmers went in for both. By 1939 many farmers had large overdrafts, and there was little money for such necessary things as maintenance of hedges and drainage. It was the Second World War that really rescued agriculture in the area, when much of the grassland was ploughed up and farming became profitable again. Sugar beet became an important crop, that grown in the District going to Ely for conversion into sugar. At the end of the War, the petrol driven tractor came into use, and much of the old ridge and furrow could be levelled and used for arable land once again. With the arrival of more machinery, hedges were grubbed up to make larger fields, and the price of land began to rise steeply.

The war also gave a boost to gravel extraction in the area, the gravel being used for run-ways and in concrete manufacture. Gradually more industry moved into the Rural District so that today there are some twenty concerns covering a wide range of activities. All of them were invited to give a brief account of their history and work, and those who replied are dealt with in the following paragraphs, giving an interesting cross-section of the industries of the Rural District.

CADBURY TYPHOO LIMITED

Situated at the former Warboys airfield, it is Cadbury Typhoo Ltd.'s biggest distribution depot, serving sub-depots as far afield as Nottingham

and Canterbury, as well as shops, wholesalers and other local customers in East Anglia. Stocks of the company's products arrive from factories in the Midlands, the North West, Scotland and nearby Histon, and up to 4,000 delivery points are covered each week. The depot provides employment for a hundred people, in the storage and loading area and in the offices.

AMEY ROADSTONE CORPORATION LIMITED

Gravel has always been an important commodity and the Rural District is fortunate in having large deposits of this mineral. Between the two World Wars demand for it grew with the rapid development of concrete manufacture. St. Ives Sand and Gravel Company was formed in this period and operated several small pits in Fenstanton, Needingworth and the Hemingfords as well as the large pit at Meadow Lane, St. Ives. During the last War, large quantities of sand and gravel were supplied for airfield construction. In 1959 the St. Ives Company joined with Greenwoods Transport to form a public Company, Greenwoods (St. Ives) Ltd., and in 1961 acquired Earith Ballast Co. Ltd. Six years later this group became part of Consolidated Goldfields, Ltd., and merged a year later with Amalgamated Roadstone. Finally, in 1972, the Group became known as Amey Roadstone Corporation, Ltd., with a head office in London and it is the largest producer of aggregates in the country. When work on a pit is completed, amenities such as marinas, lakes for fishing and boating, and large areas where wild life can flourish are left.

F. W. CARRINGTON & SON, LIMITED

The Company was established at Earith in 1954, and at first produced fishing punts and small dinghies. Demand grew for bigger and better boats and the company began to build boats of up to 35 feet, not only for the home market but also such places as Palma, Majorca, Southern France and Holland. During the last ten years more plastics have been used in boat building, and the company has expanded to become one of the major boatyards on the Ouse. A marine engineering branch has been formed to handle all engine sales and it undertakes servicing as well as the manufacture of many items of equipment used in the construction of boats. A boat-hire section has been established to provide boating holidays and these have become so popular that some two hundred holidays are now arranged annually. The company has a labour force of twelve, highly skilled craftsmen.

DEREK GLADWIN LIMITED

The business specialises in accident repairs and vehicle painting and
Derek Gladwin in a small shed in Fenton in 1956. See

with any work that may come in and a commercial shop has been established for new and secondhand vehicles. Customers include National as well as local haulage contractors and vehicle builders and work is undertaken for many of the important insurance companies as well as local garages. When the business became a private limited company, the first employee, Mr. Gamble, was nominated as one of the directors.

HENSBY COMPOSTS LIMITED

As mushrooms grew in popularity, mushroom growers found it increasingly difficult to produce enough compost since the production of mushroom compost requires a lot of space. Mr. and Mrs. Hensby decided to produce the necessary compost and found a possible site at Bluntisham Heath. It had been used by a stable manure merchant, and was close to arable farms, so had a plentiful supply of wheat straw, wheat straw and manure being two of the basic ingredients of the compost. The business has expanded greatly since then and now employs four men and two lorries as well as the two partners, and sends compost to mushroom farms all over England and Scotland.

JEWSON & SONS LIMITED

The business originated in Earith in 1836 when George Jewson set up as a coal and timber merchant and general dealer. Four years later he bought a second business in the village and took his son, John Wilson, into partnership. George Jewson died in 1848, and John Wilson, faced with the problem of rearing a large family, decided to expand the business. He acquired an old mansion in Norwich, No. 20, Colegate, which had a large garden running down to the river. The garden was converted into a timber yard, and the house was used for living accommodation and offices. Soon after this, a yard was rented in Great Yarmouth, and Jewsons began to import timber directly. Five of John Wilson Jewson's sons were in the business when he died in 1882, and one of these founded the Plymouth business in 1886. Premises at Lincoln were occupied in 1907, and in 1911 an old-established business at Diss was acquired. In 1919 the partnership became a private company. The company made history in 1921 by signing the first timber contract with Soviet Russia. After the Second World War branches were opened at Ampthill, Dereham, Fakenham and Peterborough and W. L. Cartwright & Co. (Timber) Ltd. and Spa & Warwick Timber Ltd., were taken over. New premises were bought at Cringleford near Norwich in 1960 and the company became a public company in 1953. A merger between Jewson & Sons Ltd. and Horsley Smith Group Ltd., whose head office was situated in Hull, was announced on 20th August, 1968, the name of the new group being Horsley Smith & Jewson, Ltd.

VALLEY DAIRIES LIMITED

Fendrayton farmer, arranged to sell milk from his
... to dairies in Cambridge in 1926, and

and Canterbury, as well as shops, wholesalers and other local customers in East Anglia. Stocks of the company's products arrive from factories in the Midlands, the North West, Scotland and nearby Histon, and up to 4,000 delivery points are covered each week. The depot provides employment for a hundred people, in the storage and loading area and in the offices.

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Gravel has always been an important commodity and the Rural District is fortunate in having large deposits of this mineral. Between the two World Wars demand for it grew with the rapid development of concrete manufacture. St. Ives Sand and Gravel Company was formed in this period and operated several small pits in Fenstanton, Needingworth and the Hemingfords as well as the large pit at Meadow Lane, St. Ives. During the last War, large quantities of sand and gravel were supplied for airfield construction. In 1959 the St. Ives Company joined with Greenwoods Transport to form a public Company, Greenwoods (St. Ives) Ltd., and in 1961 acquired Earith Ballast Co. Ltd. Six years later this group became part of Consolidated Goldfields, Ltd., and merged a year later with Amalgamated Roadstone. Finally, in 1972, the Group became known as Amey Roadstone Corporation, Ltd., with a head office in London and it is the largest producer of aggregates in the country. When work on a pit is completed, amenities such as marinas, lakes for fishing and boating, and large areas where wild life can flourish are left.

F. W. CARRINGTON & SON, LIMITED

The Company was established at Earith in 1954, and at first produced fishing punts and small dinghies. Demand grew for bigger and better boats and the company began to build boats of up to 35 feet, not only for the home market but also such places as Palma, Majorca, Southern France and Holland. During the last ten years more plastics have been used in boat building, and the company has expanded to become one of the major boatyards on the Ouse. A marine engineering branch has been formed to handle all engine sales and it undertakes servicing as well as the manufacture of many items of equipment used in the construction of boats. A boat-hire section has been established to provide boating holidays and these have become so popular that some two hundred holidays are now arranged annually. The company has a labour force of twelve, highly skilled craftsmen.

DEREK GLADWIN LIMITED

The business specialises in accident repairs and vehicle painting and was started by Mr. D. Gladwin, in a small shed in Fenton in 1956. Seven years later it moved to larger premises on the former Warboys airfield. In business these have had to be extended several times.

with any work that may come in and a commercial shop has been established for new and secondhand vehicles. Customers include National as well as local haulage contractors and vehicle builders and work is undertaken for many of the important insurance companies as well as local garages. When the business became a private limited company, the first employee, Mr. Gamble, was nominated as one of the directors.

HENSBY COMPOSTS LIMITED

As mushrooms grew in popularity, mushroom growers found it increasingly difficult to produce enough compost since the production of mushroom compost requires a lot of space. Mr. and Mrs. Hensby decided to produce the necessary compost and found a possible site at Bluntisham Heath. It had been used by a stable manure merchant, and was close to arable farms, so had a plentiful supply of wheat straw, wheat straw and manure being two of the basic ingredients of the compost. The business has expanded greatly since then and now employs four men and two lorries as well as the two partners, and sends compost to mushroom farms all over England and Scotland.

JEWSON & SONS LIMITED

The business originated in Earith in 1836 when George Jewson set up as a coal and timber merchant and general dealer. Four years later he bought a second business in the village and took his son, John Wilson, into partnership. George Jewson died in 1848, and John Wilson, faced with the problem of rearing a large family, decided to expand the business. He acquired an old mansion in Norwich, No. 20, Colegate, which had a large garden running down to the river. The garden was converted into a timber yard, and the house was used for living accommodation and offices. Soon after this, a yard was rented in Great Yarmouth, and Jewsons began to import timber directly. Five of John Wilson Jewson's sons were in the business when he died in 1882, and one of these founded the Plymouth business in 1886. Premises at Lincoln were occupied in 1907, and in 1911 an old-established business at Diss was acquired. In 1919 the partnership became a private company. The company made history in 1921 by signing the first timber contract with Soviet Russia. After the Second World War branches were opened at Amptill, Dereham, Fakenham and Peterborough and W. L. Cartwright & Co. (Timber) Ltd. and Spa & Warwick Timber Ltd., were taken over. New premises were bought at Cringleford near Norwich in 1960 and the company became a public company in 1953. A merger between Jewson & Sons Ltd. and Horsley Smith Group Ltd., whose head office was situated in Hull, was announced on 20th August, 1968, the name of the new group being Horsley Smith & Jewson, Ltd.

LEA VALLEY DAIRIES LIMITED

Keith Wright, a Fendrayton farmer, arranged to sell milk from his farm and others in the district to dairies in Cambridge in 1926, and production in University vacation periods to the cheese

manufacturers in Leicester. In 1932 a 200-gallon pasteurising plant was installed and two years later the company of Keith Wright Limited was incorporated. Cow and Gate Ltd. obtained a controlling interest and in 1941 Keith Wright Ltd. became a subsidiary of Cow and Gate. Ltd. The company continued to expand and was one of the first wholesalers to deliver T.T. milk to London in road tankers and to sell bottled milk wholesale to private dairymen. In 1960 Cow and Gate Ltd. merged with United Dairies Ltd. and Keith Wright became a Unigate company with the new name of Lea Valley Dairies, Ltd. The company now bottles 30,000 gallons of milk a day, collecting the milk from some 350 farms.

LYNLITE CONCRETE/LYNLITE LAMINATES

"Lynlite Concrete" commenced operations in 1964 when the disused Ramsey East railway station was acquired. It was engaged solely in the production of walling blocks for the building industry, but later expanded production to include "Spanlite" pre-stressed concrete lintels and "Briercrete" concrete manhole sections. A further expansion took place when "Lynlite Laminates" was formed in 1968 to supply materials for finished buildings. The company is a member of the internationally known "Pudlo" Group, and over the years a system of supplier contacts has been built up so that any product such as insulation boards, ceiling tiles, adhesive, "Perspex", stainless steel sheets, aluminium sheets, piano-type hinges, concealed cabinet hinges, or extruded aluminium handle sections can be obtained quickly.

LONDON BRICK COMPANY LIMITED

Warboys Brickworks dates back to 1893 when the site was occupied by a mustard field adjoining Warboys wood, and a preliminary survey was made. Two years later the manufacture of bricks, drain pipes and roofing tiles began. The proprietor was Mr. Alfred Fuller, and he was succeeded by his two sons. At the beginning of the century an ancient Danish long-boat was discovered in the clay. By 1920 the undertaking was known as Warboys Brickworks Company and about 90 people were employed. The brickworks were sold to B. J. Forder & Sons in April, 1923, and the name of the concern was changed to "The London Brick Company and Forders, Ltd." in 1926. Ten years later the title was just "The London Brick Company" and some twelve to thirteen million bricks were being made each year. The works were closed from 1942 until 1946 because the sheds were taken over by the Admiralty for stores, but when peace came they opened again with the aid of six Englishmen and between 60 and 70 German Prisoners of War. In 1948 the brickmaking stopped for a year whilst the works were modernised, and with the installation recently of a 30R.B. electrical digger, the works has the most modern extruders in the industry.

APPENDIX

CHAIRMEN OF THE ST. IVES RURAL DISTRICT, 1895-1974

1895-1908	JAMES HOW
1908-1918	JOHN GEORGE GREEN
1918-1920	JOHN GIFFORD
1920-1928	JOSEPH PYKE PENTELOW
1928-1949	LOUIS ROBERT EDWARDS
1949-1952	DAVID WILLIAM MAY
1952-1955	JOHN WILLIAM HARRIS
1955-1957	THOMAS STANLEY CHRISTMAS
1957-1960	REV. NELSON TRAFFORD, L.C.D., R.D.
1960-1963	GEORGE KIDDLE, M.B.E.
1963-1966	DOUGLAS BIDWELL WRIGHT
1966-1969	HUBERT EPEY PARREN, C.C.
1969-1972	MRS. WINIFRED MARY PRICE, C.C.
1972-1974	COMMANDER CHARLES F. ALINGTON, D.L.



Board of Guardians 1930



Council in 1974

MEMBERS OF THE FIRST COUNCIL, 1895

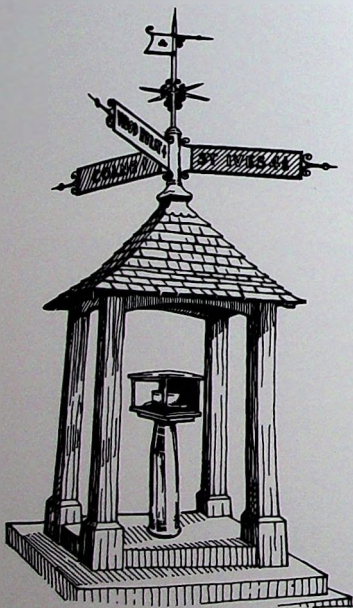
R. W. ALLPRESS
H. J. BATTCOCK
REV. C. J. COAR
S. FYSON
G. S. NEWTON
A. SANDIFER
T. C. ASHCROFT
REV. F. C. BOULTBEE
N. FEARY
J. HOW
E. R. ODAMS
J. SMITH
P. BARLOW
G. E. D. BROWN
J. E. FREEMAN
W. MASON
F. REYNOLDS

MEMBERS OF THE LAST COUNCIL, 1974

CMDR. C. F. ALINGTON (Chairman)
D. H. BURCH
P. G. M. DICKINSON
S. E. K. FALCONER
H. E. PARREN
W. F. H. ROBBINS
CANON N. TRAFFORD
D. B. WRIGHT
MRS. A. R. BUCK
G. A. EARL
C. D. HUTCHCRAFT
K. V. PRATT
R. G. SAINT
H. L. WARREN
R. G. FLEMING (Vice Chairman)
W. A. K. DEAR
REV. A. J. R. EYRE
M. F. NEWMAN
MRS. W. M. PRICE
H. STOTT
REV. G. E. WOOD

CLERKS OF SAINT IVES RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL 1895-1974

1895-1936	G. D. DAY
1936-1939	G. L. DAY
1939-1947	D. J. TANSLEY
1947-1970	E. A. N. JONES
1970-1971	F. J. CHRISTMAS
1972-1973	N. GODFREY
1973-1974	T. R. SIMPSON, D.M.A.



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